WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A self-contained character recognition system, comprising:

a housing configured for receiving at least one paper document;

a scanner in the housing outputting a digitized representation of information on the paper document;

a processor in the housing and executing a character recognition module for converting the digitized representation into electronic text; and

at least one hard disk drive (HDD) in the housing for storing the electronic text.

2. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a HDD driver executable by the processor for communicating with the HDD.

3. The system of Claim 1, wherein the HDD includes a HDD controller and at least one data storage disk.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the HDD is removable from the housing.

5. The system of Claim 1, further comprising an output bus on the housing for transferring data on the HDD to an external computing device.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor automatically executes the character recognition module upon scanning a document and stores the electronic text in the HDD, without the need for a user command.

7. The system of Claim 1, further comprising:

at least one input device engaged with the housing; and

at least one output device on the housing.

8. A method for converting text on paper to electronic form, comprising:

providing a single housing holding a scanner, a processor accessing a character recognition module, and at least one hard disk drive (HDD);

feeding at least one paper document into the housing;

scanning the paper document using the scanner;

converting an output of the scanner into electronic text using the character recognition module; and

storing the electronic text on the HDD.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein the converting act is automatically executed by the processor in response to the scanning act.

10. A portable scanner system, comprising:

a scanner in a housing for scanning printed text on paper documents;

a hard disk drive (HDD) in the housing; and

a processor interposed between the scanner and HDD within the housing to generate an electronic version of the paper text and store the electronic version on the HDD.

11. The system of Claim 10, further comprising a character recognition module for converting the digitized representation into electronic text, the character recognition module being executable by the processor.

12. The system of Claim 11, further comprising a hard disk drive driver executable by the processor for communicating with the HDD.

13. The system of Claim 11, wherein the HDD includes a HDD controller and at least one data storage disk.

14. The system of Claim 11, wherein the HDD is removable from the housing.

15. The system of Claim 11, further comprising an output bus on the housing for transferring data on the HDD to an external computing device.

16. The system of Claim 11, wherein the processor automatically executes the character recognition module upon scanning a document and stores the electronic version in the HDD, without the need for a user command.

17. The system of Claim 11, further comprising:

at least one input device engaged with the housing; and

at least one output device on the housing.